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September 15, 2011

To: Education and Local Government Interim Committee

Fr: Sidney School Trustees—Class A Caucus

Re: K-12 Perspectives and Concerns

EDUCATION AND LOCAL GOV'T
September 16, 2011
Rm 102, Capitol Bldg, Helena
EXHIBIT 7

Introduction

Communities in oil and gas impact regions are feeling the impacts of an industry that is moving into full operation. This is both exciting and challenging for communities and schools in these regions. New businesses, new employment opportunities, and economic revitalization in many areas are a welcomed change. On the other side, communities and schools are faced with the corresponding challenges. The following is a quick snapshot of the challenges for Sidney Public Schools.

1. 2011-2012 student enrollment increases and educational needs.

- 10 % increase in K-8 enrollment
- Sidney Elementary and Sidney Middle School (K-8)
 - Kindergarten—20 additional new students
 - Grades 1-5: 73 new students
 - Grades 6-8: 43 new students
- Additional hiring of 2 elementary teachers and 1 special education teacher
- Reassigning of 1 language model aide to elementary (1 to 1).
- Hiring of two additional aides.
- Reassignment of one FTE high school teacher to Middle School full time
- Academic needs:
 - 11.2 % of new students in grades 1-8 requiring special education services
 - 39.6 % of students in grades 6-8 needing academic support (i.e., Title 1)
 - 8.7 % of new students reporting for first grade lacked academic readiness for first grade—moved back to kindergarten
- 24 new students to the high school (16.7 percent of new students need additional academic support).

Enrollment increases are skewed towards grades K-8 with a net increase of ten (10) percent to date. The net increase at the high school is negligible when comparing overall student gains and losses. At present, the district continues to see a gain of 5-10 new students each week in grades K-12.

Sidney Public Schools Serving Parents and Students

2. 56.8 % projected student enrollment increase with proposed residential developments.

Enrollment history related to the district's peak enrollment periods.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Grades K-8</u>	<u>Grades 9-12</u>	<u>Total K-12</u>
1981-1982	1418 (peak attendance k-8)		
1995-1996	1049	566 (peak attendance HS)	1615
2000-2001	923	505	1428
2005-2006	768	479	1247
2010-2011	748	416	1164
2011-2012	822*	365*(enrollment on August 24, 2011)	1187

The two major residential subdivisions proposed will have a significant impact on the District's K-12 enrollment in the next 1-3 years. The proposed Sunrise Village subdivision has the potential of adding 570 students to the District's current enrollment. The North View subdivision is much smaller in scale and has a student potential of 104 students. These projections do not reflect student enrollment increases that may be realized with developments being undertaken by smaller independent developers in the Sidney area.

Primary concern with projected enrollments: One option the Sidney School District is reviewing is the complete reopening and staffing of Central Elementary School if both developments commit. The current school structure is a two story building with two associated construction periods, 1949 and 1980. The original 1949 structure (9,640 sq.ft. each story) would require remodeling and updating as it suitable for instruction. Considering remodeling costs in our region at \$225 per square foot, the estimated cost is \$4,338,000. This also requires staffing at 1980 levels or 30-35 professional and support staff at cost of around \$1.5 million dollars. These costs do not reflect textbooks and other associated instructional costs.

3. Funding Flexibility and Support Concerns.

- Schools experiencing sharp increases in student enrollment do not realize additional direct state aid (DSA) immediately and see minimal relief only if the increase is over 6% and then, for only the percentage over the 6 percent. The actual amount of DSA for Sidney's elementary district would be approximately \$11,450 in direct state aid based on the current enrollment increase. This increase in DSA does not cover the cost of the one language model aide moved to the elementary district to meet the needs of 1 student. **School districts experiencing steep increases in student enrollment need to realize additional direct state aide if they are to effectively work with impacts associated with these increases. Using the net gain of 74 students in K-8 for Sidney, the projected DSA equates to approximately \$155 for each new student.**
- Oil and gas districts need greater flexibility in how they can use oil and gas revenue between districts to address impact concerns. Sidney's elementary district and high school district receive revenue on a ratio of approximately \$1:\$4. Legislation allowing non-K-12 districts to use oil and gas revenue between districts to deal with the immediate impacts associated with infrastructure needs, staffing needs, and other educational needs (i.e., textbooks, supplies) would allow districts to respond effectively to unexpected increases at a local level. Trustees know what the impacts are and where they need to direct financial resources.

On a completely separate note from local concerns, federal mandates are a concern as they often assume a one size fits all approach.

4. NCLB and Reauthorization: The U.S. Department of Education's own estimate on the number of our Nation's school that would not make Adequate Yearly Progress was around 82 percent according to their own press releases this year. The regulatory relief sought by State Superintendent of Schools, Denise Juneau, from the U.S. DOE was welcomed but in the end, the relief actually provided MT schools was negligible and really does not address issues with this flawed piece of legislation. A concern in moving forward with any new federal regulation and/or state regulations concerning school accountability is the application of common sense and engagement of legitimate educational practices that are researched based. Schools are currently buried in paper tigers that ask for the quantifying and qualifying of data concerning each student, each staff member, etc. The U.S. Department of Education's "quid-pro-quo" approaches disguised as regulatory relief couched in educational practices, which in many cases are not researched based, are counter-productive to achievement. Corporal punishment has been removed from schools because it is not effective. Punishing schools because they missed the proficiency mark on one of the 41 categories required for the making of "Adequate Yearly Progress" falls into the same category as corporal punishment—it is simply not effective and detracts from achievement as well as real accountability. Collectively, OPI and others decision makers need to work with educators on the ground floor to bring about real educational change as a one-size fits all approach to Montana's diverse educational community will fail.

Summary Points:

1. Concerns with funding as related to increases in student enrollment
2. Concerns with funding of staff to work with students at-risk academically—special education, title, counseling services.
3. Concern with the lack of flexibility with oil and gas revenue between districts to deal with oil/gas production impacts.
4. Federal mandates that do not fit Montana's schools and are often punitive.

Thank you for your time today and on behalf of the Sidney Trustees, we would welcome the opportunity to provide you with a tour of Eastern Montana.